

February 21, 1996 LB 1001

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. Madam President, members, the amendments change the bill in the wording. The original bill dealt with the question of placement of children in out-of-home care and relatives being given a primary placement authority. The committee amendment gives preferred rather than primary. It's a lessening, in a sense, but still a preference is provided for to relatives when a child needs to be placed. So that is one change. In addition, we clarify that the interest of the child is a primary consideration in family reunification decisions. And, again, that goes back to some of the previous legislation we've had in the past in trying to recognize the balancing of keeping a family together and taking care of the interest of the child. And that balancing act, we want to tilt more toward recognizing the best interest of the child and so that's...that's what the committee amendment does. With that, I'd ask for adoption of the committee amendment.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Wesely. Discussion on the committee amendments. Senator Bernard-Stevens.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Very briefly, I don't want to take much time because I know there's an amendment. But, Senator Wesely, haven't we also made clear in other parts of the statute where the best interest of the child is, which is primary importance to any of these situations?

SENATOR WESELY: We've tried to do that, but not always with the effect that we would like.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: Right.

SENATOR WESELY: So we're trying to (interruption)...

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: But right now if, if in statute we already say that the best interest of the child must be, and it still is in here, I mean if it was in the best interest of the child to put a relative in a preferred place, they could do so now, could they not?

SENATOR WESELY: Oh, right, right.

SENATOR BERNARD-STEVENS: So what are we really doing here? Is this just semantics to make people feel good but it won't change